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Assessment of Occupational Stress among Library Professionals in University Libraries of Assam, India

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ABSTRACT

Occupational stress has become presently a vital issue for research and a major concern for human resource management in any organization. The present study intends to categorize and assess the levels of occupational stress faced by the library professionals in university libraries of Assam, India and also to identify the most powerful stressors generating occupational stress amongst them. Descriptive research design and survey method was used for this study to obtain data from 66 Library Professionals working in the libraries of Central universities, State universities, and the Institution which has been given the status of a university. A structured questionnaire adapted from Occupational Stress Index (OSI) of Srivastava and Singh (1984) and Organisational Role Stress (ORS) Scale of Pareek (1983) was employed as a tool for measuring occupational stress among the respondents. The collected data were subjected to statistical analysis using simple percentage, mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics. The findings of the study revealed that the library professionals were experiencing high level of occupational stress. Role Overload was found to be the most powerful stressor with highest weighted average ($\bar{x} = 6.27$). No significant difference ($p > 0.05$) was found in the mean scores of occupational stress of library professionals on the basis of their gender and marital status. This study is significantly useful for the library professionals of academic library to assess the levels of occupational stress they are experiencing as well as identify the stressors in order to adopt coping strategies for dealing with such stress.

Keywords: Occupational stress, Job stress, Stressor, Library professionals, University libraries, Assam, India

INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress has become now-a-days a vital issue for many research topics and a major concern for the management of human resources in any organization. According to Larson (2004) occupational stress, work stress or job stress are terminologies that are used interchangeably which refer to the same thing. Kaur and Kathuria (2018) had defined occupational stress as a mental or physical tension or both, created and related to occupation and its environment comprising of persons and objects from within and outside the work place which results into absenteeism, turn over accidents, low productivity and service efficiency, lack of motivation and initiative, job dissatisfaction, alienation and disruption of the smooth functioning of the organization. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) also defined occupational stress as the harmful and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker (NIOSH, 1999).

The Library professionals experience stress in their occupation as they try to readjust their lives with the changing library environment, job rotation, job promotion, etc. While adjusting to such changing library environment, stress will either help or interrupt them depending on how they react to it. There is a pressure on the library professionals to adopt knowledge of new technologies along with traditional method of functions and services. But there is limited scope for training programs, higher studies, refresher courses, and this becomes a cause of stress among library professionals. The fear about job security is also a reason of stress among library professionals, because a number of departments appoint the computer professionals (Somvir & Kaushik, 2013). According to Akakandelwa and Jain (2013), the adoption of new technologies has brought new challenges such as the need for continuous staff training, frequent need to migrate from one software to another, or to upgrade from one version to another, maintenance of hardware, and learning upcoming technological changes to accommodate in their processes. This all has resulted in change of role played by library staff. Libraries are now shifting from traditional libraries to digital libraries which have given rise to a new type of “on the job stress’ i.e., “techno-stress” caused by working with multiple

and rapidly changing computer systems, and mediating between these systems and the demands of one's organization, staff, customers, and personal life (Ranjna, 2015).

Although a lot of research has been conducted to study occupational stress and its impact in other professions like banking, medical, teaching, IT, etc., there are only few studies as far as library science profession is concerned. The present study makes an attempt to assess the levels of occupational stress faced by the library professionals in university libraries of Assam, the north eastern part of India and to identify the most powerful stressors which has generated occupational stress amongst them. A stressor is nothing but any external stimulus, condition, event, etc. which causes stress.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gohain (2010) attempted to identify the different kinds of stress faced by the library professionals working in the library and information centre and also critically analyses the best ways to manage such stress. Nonglait and Thabah (2010) tried to identify the sources of work related stress and investigate the problems faced by the library staff of Central Library, North Eastern Hill University. The findings revealed some stress level of the library staff in different sections of the Central Library in all aspects i.e., mentally, emotionally and physically. Stress also aroused due to workload and organizational commitment. Ratha, Hardia and Naidu (2012) stated that librarians of private engineering colleges in Indore city have less occupational stress in comparison to the assistant librarian, whereas the occupational stress level of the book lifter is more in comparison to the librarian and the assistant librarian. The study has also highlighted some of the causes of occupational stress among the library professionals such as workload, technology and shift work, user satisfaction, job insecurity, lack of administrative support, low status, inadequate salary, changing library environment and reduce staff strength. Ogunlana et al. (2013) highlighted that there is a significant difference in the levels of job stress among male and female librarians. Female librarians had significantly lower job satisfaction as compared to their male counterparts. Job stress level was found to be higher among new and inexperienced staff. A positive correlation was found between librarians' job stress and job satisfaction. Majority of the librarians had found to have higher levels of job stress and low job satisfaction level. Ejike, Uwakwe and Asadu (2014) revealed that different categories of job stress such as psychological stress, emotional stress, technological stress, situational stress, and accidental stress existed among the library staff of Polytechnic libraries of North-Central

Nigeria. Work overload, environmental hazard, poor communication, lack of social support, poor leadership style, job insecurity, lack of control, role ambiguity and health related factor are found to be the causes of job stress among the library staff. As a result, it has led to absenteeism, sleeplessness, health deterioration, depression and tiredness among the library staff. Mahanta (2015) carried out a study to identify sources of stress and magnitude of stress among the library professionals of Central library, Tezpur University. It was revealed that the library professionals were experiencing organizational role stress to a moderate extent. Role Ambiguity, Inter-Role Distance, Role Stagnation and Role Erosion were identified as powerful sources of stress among the library staff. Kaur and Katharia (2018) conducted a study to explore the occupational stress among library professionals working in universities of Punjab and Chandigarh with the help of a self-constructed questionnaire. It was revealed that there is no significant difference in the level of occupational stress among library professionals in respect to their gender and marital status. In addition to, it was also found that the library professionals working in private and deemed universities were more prone to be stressed than the library professionals working in central and state universities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives framed for the present study:

- To categorize and assess the levels of occupational stress among the library professionals in university libraries of Assam, India.
- To identify the most powerful stressors generating occupational stress among the library professionals.
- To compare the occupational stress among the library professionals on the basis of their gender and marital status.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

In Assam, presently there are 2 Central university, 15 State university, 1 Deemed university, and 3 Institutions of National Importance (University Grants Commission, 2020). The present study is conducted as a pilot study with the following universities on representative basis and the structured questionnaires were distributed among the LIS professionals of those universities. Descriptive research design and survey method was employed to obtain data from Library Professionals working in the libraries of Central universities, State universities, and the Institution which has been given the status of a University. Seven university libraries

of Assam which were established before 2011 excluding private universities were purposively selected by the researcher for conducting the study. 85 copies of questionnaire were distributed among all the working library professionals, out of which 66 copies (77.64%) were received back. The sample population consists of 66 library professionals (41 males and 25 females) working as permanent staff and having minimum Diploma/Certificate degree as educational qualification in the field of Library and Information Science. The collected data were subjected to statistical analysis using simple percentage, mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics. The selected University Libraries for the study are shown in Table 1.

A structured Questionnaire adapted from Occupational Stress Index (OSI) of Srivastava and Singh (1984) and Organisational Role Stress (ORS) Scale of Pareek (1983) was employed as a tool for measuring occupational stress among the respondents. The OSI scale which is widely used scale in Indian context was adopted by Ratha, Hardia and Naidu (2012) and Chandraiah et al. (2003) in their study. Similarly the ORS scale has also been used by Mahanta (2015) and Jena and Pradhan (2011) in their research study. The questionnaire measures 8 types of stressors (work overload, role ambiguity, low status, poor peer relationship, personal inadequacy, under participation, strenuous working conditions and intrinsic impoverishment). Each stressor contained 2 statements which makes total of 16 statements including 8 negative statements with responses to be rated on a five-point Likert scale. The score values assigned to each response are 5 = “Strongly Agree”, 4 = “Agree”, 3 = “Disagree”, 2 = “Strongly Disagree” and 1 = “Undecided”. In case of negative statements, the score values have been reversed i.e., 1,2,3,4 and 5 respectively. The sum of the score values assigned to each response is the total score of occupational stress.

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaires by University library

Name of the University	Location	Name of the Library	Year of Estd.	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Received
Assam Agricultural University	Jorhat	Rev. B.M. Pugh Library	1969	6	6
Assam University	Silchar	Rabindra Library	1994	20	11

Dibrugarh University	Dibrugarh	Lakshminath Bezbaroa Library	1965	8	7
Gauhati University	Guwahati	Krishna Kanta Handiqui Library	1948	21	15
Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati	Guwahati	Lakshminath Bezbaroa Central Library	1994	15	11
National Law University and Judicial Academy	Guwahati	NLUJAA Library	2011	5	5
Tezpur University	Tezpur	Central Library	1994	10	10
Total				85	66

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results along with findings are presented here keeping in mind the objectives of the study.

Demographic Information

The following table gives demographic information of the respondents.

Table 2: Demographic information of the respondents

Variable		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	41	62.12
	Female	25	37.87
Marital Status	Married	55	83.33
	Unmarried	11	16.66
Age Group	21-30 yrs	7	10.60
	31-40 yrs	24	36.36
	41-50 yrs	21	31.81
	51-60 yrs	14	21.21
Professional Qualification	Ph.D.	12	18.18
	M.Phil.	6	9.09
	Master Degree	41	62.12
	Bachelor Degree	6	9.09
	Certificate/Diploma	1	1.51

Years of experience	0-5	11	16.66
	6-10	19	28.78
	11-15	7	10.60
	Above 15	29	43.93

Table 2 shows the frequencies for the demographic information obtained from the respondents. It was clearly highlighted that male library professionals constituted (62.12%) of the sample population and females made up to (37.87%) of the sample. Most of the respondents are married (83.33%) and belong to the age group of 31-40 yrs (36.36%). Master degree holders constitute the larger proportion (62.12%) of the respondent's professional qualification. 18.18% of respondents are having Ph.D. as their professional qualification followed by M.Phil. degree (9.09%), Bachelor degree (9.09%) and only (1.51%) having certificate or diploma degree. Out of the total respondents, (43.93%) had worked for more than 15 years, (28.78%) had worked for 6-10 years, (16.66%) for 0-5 years and (10.60%) for 11-15 years.

Levels of Occupational Stress

In order to categorize the levels of occupational stress among library professionals in university libraries, it is important to find out the mean and standard deviation (σ) of the total score of occupational stress. The total score of occupational stress obtained from each questionnaire was categorized into three levels, i.e., high, moderate and low. The scores falling above or = ($\text{Mean} + \sigma$); between ($\text{Mean} + \sigma$) and ($\text{Mean} - \sigma$); and below ($\text{Mean} - \sigma$) were categorized as high level, moderate level and low level respectively (George, 2006). Table 3 shows the categorization of levels of occupational stress among library professionals.

Table 3: Categorization of levels of Occupational Stress as High, Moderate and Low

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	High Level (Above or = $\text{Mean} + \sigma$)	Moderate Level (Between $\text{Mean} + \sigma$ and $\text{Mean} - \sigma$)	Low Level (Below or = $\text{Mean} - \sigma$)
Occupational Stress	42.48	5.781	$42.48 + 5.781 = 48.26$ Scores falling above or = 48	$(42.48 + 5.781)$ and $(42.48 - 5.781)$ Scores falling between 48 and 37	$42.48 - 5.781 = 36.69$ Scores falling below or = 37

From the above table it is observed that the mean and standard deviation of the total occupational score was found to be 42.48 and 5.781 respectively. As mentioned above the

total score of occupational stress derived from each questionnaire was categorised into three levels- High, Moderate and Low levels of occupational stress. Table 3.1 presents the comparison between the three levels of occupational stress categorised and result of their test of significance of mean difference with the help of t-test statistics.

Table 3.1: Comparison between the different levels of Occupational Stress and result of Test of Significance of Mean Difference

Variable	Category	Frequency (N=66)	Mean	't' value between High & Moderate	't' value between Moderate & Low	't' value between High & Low
Occupational Stress	High Level	18	50.00	-12.633*	-9.131*	-24.333*
	Moderate Level	34	41.68			
	Low Level	14	34.79			

***Significant at 0.05 (two-tailed) level**

Table 3.1 depicts that there is significant difference in the mean scores of levels of occupational stress, i.e., between high & moderate ($p < 0.05$), moderate & low ($p < 0.05$) and high & low ($p < 0.05$). Since the mean score of high level category of occupational stress is higher than compared to other two categories i.e., moderate and low, therefore it indicates that the library professionals in selected university libraries of Assam, India were experiencing high level of occupational stress.

Stressor generating Occupational Stress

To identify the most powerful stressor which is generating occupational stress among the library professionals, the weighted average of 8 stressors was calculated.

Table 4: Calculation of weighted average of individual stressor

Stressors	Weighted average(\bar{x})	Rank
Work Overload	6.27	1st
Low Status	5.94	2nd
Personal Inadequacy	5.70	3rd
Under participation	5.33	4th
Poor Peer Relationship	5.17	5th
Intrinsic Impoverishment	4.74	6th

Strenuous Working Conditions	4.68	7 th
Role Ambiguity	4.65	8 th

It is seen from the above table that work overload, low status, personal inadequacy, under participation and poor peer relationship are some of the powerful sources of occupational stress among the library professionals. Work overload is the most powerful stressor with highest weighted average ($\bar{x} = 6.27$). It implies that the library professionals are experiencing high level of occupational stress because of the excessive workload as a result of lack of professional staff. The next powerful stressor is Low status ($\bar{x} = 5.94$) that indicates that the library professionals are not given due significance by higher authorities in respect to their work and position. Personal inadequacy is the third important stressor identified ($\bar{x} = 5.70$) which implies lack of required skill or ability of library professionals to perform their respective duties efficiently. Under participation is another important stressor with ($\bar{x} = 5.33$) which is concerned about the participation or consultation of library professionals in major policy making/decision making activities in the library. Another important stressor identified is poor peer relationship ($\bar{x} = 5.17$) is lack of cordial relationship within library professionals as well as lack of support and coordination in solving problems.

Gender and Occupational Stress

To compare the occupational stress between male and female library professionals, the t-value was calculated on the basis of their total occupational stress scores.

Table 5: Comparative analysis of occupational stress between male and female library professionals

Occupational Stress	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Inference
	Male	41	41.54	5.573	-1.733	Insignificant
	Female	25	44.04	5.891		

Table 5 depicts that the t-value for mean difference in occupational stress of male and female is -1.733, which is not significant ($p > 0.05$). It means there is no significant difference in the mean scores of occupational stress of library professionals on the basis of their gender.

Marital Status and Occupational Stress

Similarly, for comparing the occupational stress between married and unmarried library professionals, the t-value was calculated.

Table 6: Comparative analysis of occupational stress between married and unmarried library professionals

Occupational Stress	Marital Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Inference
	Married	55	42.49	5.950	.019	Insignificant
	Unmarried	11	42.45	5.106		

It is revealed from above table that the t-value for mean difference in occupational stress of married and unmarried is .019, which is not significant ($p > 0.05$). It means there is no significant difference in the mean scores of occupational stress of library professionals on the basis of their marital status.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study indicate that the library professionals in university libraries of Assam, India were experiencing high level of occupational stress. Some of the powerful stressors identified were work overload, low status, personal inadequacy, under participation and poor peer relationship. Work overload was found to be the most powerful stressor which implies that the library professionals are experiencing high level of occupational stress because of the excessive workload. This finding is further supported by Topper (2007) who mentioned work overload as one of the chief causes of stress due to short staffing. The study also reveals that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of occupational stress between male and female as well as married and unmarried library professionals. The above finding is in agreement with Kaur and Kathuria (2018) who reported that there is no significant difference in the levels of occupational stress with respect to their gender and marital status. However this is contrary to the findings of Ogunlana et al. (2013) who highlighted that there is significant difference in the levels of job stress between male and female librarians.

To overcome this situation, the parent institution is expected to recruit more number of skilled library professionals besides initiating some process in the form of rewarding working

professionals by way of promotional avenues, better working conditions along with appreciating for the work done both at individual and collective level. In order to handle stressful situations, one must learn how to identify the stressors and develop coping strategies to deal with them with practice and planning. A stress-free environment will result in the enhancement of job performance and thus accelerate job satisfaction.

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